Germany and Prussia By: Courtney and Zach

Congress of Vienna

The Congress of Vienna was a peace conference held from November 1814 until June 1815 with the purpose of settling the rising issues related to the French Revolutionary Wars, the Napoleonic Wars and the dissolving of the Holy Roman Empire. The main negotiations during the conference were conducted by the “Big Four”; this included Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria, and later on a fifth power was represented for France.

The Congress of Vienna created the German Confederation to succeed the Holy Roman Empire. The confederation of 38 states was placed under the power of the Austrian Emperor. However Prussia felt that they had the right to rule the German lands and this lead to the Austro-Prussian War in 1866. The war resulted in the collapse of the German Confederation.

Revolutions

The `March Days` of 1848 were a series of protests and rebellions loosely coordinated in the German Confederation. These began due to the crop failures, bread riots, business recessions and a cholera outbreak all leading to famine and suffering. The prime demands of the revolutionaries included a national German parliament, freedom of the press and German unification. The Frankfurt Assembly was established to curb the rebellions and unify all of Germany. The assembly failed in its goal due to a war with Denmark and the revolution failed with no major changes made.

Major Political Players

Otto Von Bismarck is credited for the unification of Germany under Prussian rule and the establishment of the German Empire. Bismarck was appointed Prime Minister of Prussia in 1862 by King Wilhelm I and although it was not in his duties he directed the politics, both domestic and foreign, in Prussia. He became the Chancellor of the North German Confederation in 1867 and after creating the German Empire he became its first Chancellor in 1871. He restricted democracy and unsuccessfully attempted to use an anti- Catholic and anti- Socialist legislation, however in 1871 the Catholic Department of Prussian Ministry was abolished and in 1872 the Jesuits were expelled from Germany. He dominated politics until he was dismissed in 1871 by Wilhelm II.

Frederick William IV was ruler during the revolutions in 1848 and was offered the position of Emperor of the Germans. He however turned down the job.

Wilhelm I became the Prussian King after his brother Frederick William I and was the first German Emperor. Along with his Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, Wilhelm unified Germany and established the German Empire. He was less involved in politics than his brother and appointed Bismarck to Prime Minister to assist in political decisions.

[**North German Confederation**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_German_Confederation)**, 1867-1871**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Title** | **House** | **Began** | **Ended** |
| [Wilhelm I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_I,_German_Emperor), [King of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Prussia) (Wilhelm I, König von Preußen) | President of the North German Confederation | [Hohenzollern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern) | 1 July 1867 | 18 January 1871[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_German_monarchs#cite_note-1) |

* [**German Empire**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Empire)**, 1871-1918**

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| **Name** | **Title** | **House** | **Began** | **Ended** |
| [Wilhelm I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_I,_German_Emperor), [King of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Prussia) (Wilhelm I, König von Preußen) | German Emperor | [Hohenzollern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern) | 18 January 1871 | 9 March 1888 |
| [Frederick III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_III,_German_Emperor), [King of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Prussia) (Friedrich III, König von Preußen) | German Emperor | [Hohenzollern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern) | 9 March 1888 | 15 June 1888 |
| [Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_II,_German_Emperor), [King of Prussia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_of_Prussia) (Wilhelm II, König von Preußen) | German Emperor | [Hohenzollern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hohenzollern) | 15 June 1888 | 9 November 1918 |

Unification

Unification of Germany was first attempted by the Frankfurt Assembly in 1848 but the attempt was unsuccessful. The assembly was distracted from the unification plans by a war with Denmark. After this failed attempt Germans looked to Prussia for leadership because it had become a strong prosperous state. The Prussian King Wilhelm I appointed Otto von Bismarck to the title of Prime Minister; Bismarck governed Prussia by ignoring parliament. His foreign policies created friction, which lead to a war unifying North Germany. A later war between France and Prussia had southern Germany agreeing to enter the North German Confederation. In 1871 Wilhelm I was named Emperor of the German Empire.

Legitimacy

The German Emperors prior to 1914 were legitimate because of blood ties. Wilhelm was chosen as the first Emperor of Germany and every following Emperor was direct blood family of Wilhelm. However when Bismarck was in the role of Prime Minister, he held a lot of political power. This was seen as an illegitimate ruling although he was never considered the “king”.

Industrialization

Machinery was used quite early in history within Germany, but because the area was fractioned into small states with no unification, it could not be properly established. Every market was in a different customs barrier. The construction of railways was the major driving force for industrialization, not only did it provide quicker, more reliable transportation of machinery but also provided employment opportunities in new industries. “Germany's industrial development was the fastest in the world. Between 1880 and 1913 coal production had increased by 400 per cent. Other industries such as steel, chemicals, engineering and armaments had also grown rapidly. In a thirty year period Germany's international trade had quadrupled”. (1) By 1914 Germany had the second largest Navy in the world and the industry for building ships and weaponry was booming.

Infrastructure

The creation of railways throughout Germany was a major step towards unifying it, mainly because trade became easier and quicker. Starting in 1843, the railways also benefited the military; they used them in war time to transport weapons and soldiers. This was the biggest change in infrastructure during the period between 1830- 1914

Domestic and foreign policy

The foreign policy of Germany faced a number of significant problems under Wilhelm II. He was and impatient man and took affairs into his own control many times, angering the governments of other countries. Wilhelm II had problems with his consistency in foreign affairs, his refusal to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with the Russian Empire, which guaranteed Russian neutrality in the event of an attack by France, was seen by many historians as the worst offense committed by Wilhelm in terms of foreign policy.

Domestic policies under Bismarck were completed by him ignoring parliament; he collected taxes and reorganized the army. He also wanted to limit the control of the Catholic Church. Bismarck was anti-Catholic and anti- Socialist. He demolished the Catholic department of Prussian Ministry in 1872 and the Jesuits were expelled from Germany in 1872. Bismarck’s policies did not last long and in the end he was basically unsuccessful.

Ideological Reflections

One can summarize Bismarck's ideology under three objectives: Kulturkampf, social reform, and national unification.

Kulturkampf was Bismarck’s attempt to lessen the influence that the Catholic Church held.

Social Reforms were placed to contain the working class and reduce the socialist groups impacts. He implemented health care, accident insurance, invalidity and old age insurance. These were the largest social reforms in the world at the time.

National unification meant that Bismarck wanted to rid Germany of the differences between the German states, especially in legislation.

Balance of Power

The balance of power in Prussia and Germany was mainly held by the King in Prussia and the emperor in Germany, and the parliament had some say in affairs. However once Bismarck became the Prime Minister, he affected affairs of politics and Wilhelm I became more of a figure head. Wilhelm II moved more of the power back to the German Emperor in 1871 when he relieved Bismarck of his duties.

Militarism

The Prussian army was under the control of the King; in the 1860’s King Wilhelm I attempted to enlarge the army but was denied the new taxes for this by the Parliament. He brought in Bismarck to make the army larger, and despite the refusal from parliament, Bismarck collected the taxes and reorganized the army. The victories of the Prussian army were the leading force in unifying Germany under the Prussian king.

The German military was directly rooted from the Prussian army and continued to grow under leadership of the German Emperor. By 1914 Germany had the second largest Navy in the World, including battleships, cruisers and submarines. In 1912 the GAAS, German Army Air Service, was created. The GAAS sector of the military grew dramatically within a matter of a few years.

The German Navy was the only one to rival the strength of the British Navy. They went neck to neck in a race to build the largest battle ship, Britain won the race but this event proved the size and power of the Germans.

Alliances

Prussia signed an alliance with Poland in 1790. There was the Three Emperors Alliance in 1872 between Germany, Austria and Russia; it was dissolved in 1878. Germany and Austria allied in 1879. In 1882 Germany signed a military alliance with Italy and Austria-Hungry. However, shortly after renewing the Alliance in June 1902, Italy secretly extended a similar guarantee to France. This became known as the Triple Alliance. Germany is well known for its secret alliances, creating problems in the events of a war. The secret Russian-German treaty was signed in 1887; this was never renewed after the release of Bismarck from his post. In 1914 they also signed a secret alliance with Turkey.

Imperialism

Germany mainly imperialized Africa and New Guinea; they were after the agricultural and mineral products of the region. The majority of Germany’s colonies were taken within only a few weeks of war. However the German colonial empire ended officially in 1920 by the Treaty of Versailles. In the beginning, imperialism was difficult because of the lack of unification in Germany; many separate German states were competing for colonies already under German control. This limited the area Germany could gain control over during the “scramble for Africa”.

Political Reforms

Edict of Emancipation in 1807 ended serfdom, and all class distinctions. “In 1810, Prussia introduced state certification requirements for teachers, which significantly raised the standard of teaching” (2) There was the Land reform in 1811 that gave the peasants two-thirds of the land they had worked for the nobles while leaving those nobles the other third of land in compensation for their loss. Military reforms were also common; items such as promotion by merit and banning foreign recruits helped increase the feeling of nationalism among the Prussian states. By promoting within the military was able to instill high morale and efficiency into their soldiers. Bismarck implemented health care, accident insurance, invalidity and old age insurance into his social reforms. He also tried to implement reforms against the Catholic Church, limiting their power and making the King, head of politics.

Franco-Prussian War

The Franco-Prussian War was a war in 1870-1871 lost by France to the German states under the leadership of Prussia. Prussia had the help of the North German Confederation as well as help from the southern German states. The Prussian Army was significantly larger than the French Army and Prussian won the war. The southern German states had finally agreed to join the German Confederation in unification before the war had even ended, thus completing Bismarck’s goal of unifying Germany. The conflict was a culmination of years of tension between the two nations, which finally came to a head over the issue of a Hohenzollern candidate, the blood family ruling Prussia, for the vacant Spanish throne, following the deposition of Isabella II in 1868. The Siege of Paris (19 September 1870 – 28 January 1871) brought about the final defeat of the French Army during the Franco-Prussian War. The new German Empire was proclaimed at the Palace of Versailles, including newly conquered lands and the southern states of Germany.

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